

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Conservation Officer

Class Code: 90312

A. Purpose:

Manages wildlife, fisheries, water, and land resources; implements department programs; and enforces laws in an assigned district to conserve and protect fish and wildlife, represent the department to the public, and provide recreational opportunities and public safety.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

Conservation Officers manage wildlife, fisheries, water, and land resources; enforce wildlife, criminal, and water laws; and implement department programs in an assigned district. Assistant Regional Supervisors administer and coordinate a specific program within a region and provide daily work direction to Conservation Foremen, and Resource Biologists. Regional Supervisors are responsible for implementation of department programs; control of funds, and management of facilities in a region; and supervision of regional personnel.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Manages wildlife resources to conserve and perpetuate species, provide recreational resources for the public, and control depredation.
 - a. Estimates wildlife population levels and trends by conducting surveys.
 - b. Evaluates species and habitat availability, hunter numbers, and landowner tolerance to determine harvest quotas.
 - c. Coordinates with other department personnel, other government agencies, and tribal executives and game managers to develop wildlife management plans.
 - d. Formulates annual population and harvest goals for big game.
 - e. Designs hunting unit boundaries to achieve desired harvest.
 - f. Recommends harvest limits and season lengths in a region and statewide.
 - g. Develops and implements plans to alleviate wildlife depredation and resolve other human-wildlife conflicts.
 - h. Investigates wildlife deaths.
 - i. Performs animal necropsies.
 - ii. Prepares tissue samples for laboratory analyses.
2. Manages fisheries resources to conserve, perpetuate, and introduce species; maintain and develop habitat; and enhance recreational opportunities.
 - a. Recommends and implements lake management plans on primary waters and develops and implements fisheries management strategies on secondary waters.
 - b. Evaluates area fisheries' needs and anglers' requests and recommends stocking and habitat development.
 - c. Designs and implements habitat development projects.
 - d. Recommends harvest numbers and size limits, season designs, and other specific harvest regulations for fisheries populations.
 - e. Operates and maintains fish-rearing ponds and traps and transfers fish.
 - f. Monitors commercial fishing to protect game fish, record weights of rough fish removed, and authorize contract payments to fishermen.

- g. Develops and enhances public fishing opportunities on private waters by recruiting landowners into department programs.
 - h. Investigates fish losses to determine cause and evaluates potential impacts on fish populations.
 - j. Recommends action on applications for fishing tournaments and monitors subsequent activities.
3. Develops long- and short-term plans to improve wildlife habitat and recreational opportunity on department-owned and leased lands and develops and coordinates wildlife habitat programs on privately owned lands.
 - a. Evaluates areas for wildlife production and habitat development potential.
 - b. Develops five-year plans to manage areas to maximum potential within budgetary feasibility.
 - c. Implements, evaluates, and updates five-year management plans annually.
 - d. Negotiates and writes contracts with tenants, evaluates their compliance with contract stipulations, authorizes payments, and collects lease fees.
 - e. Introduces department programs to landowners and negotiates, monitors, and authorizes payment of contracts.
 - f. Evaluates land for acquisition and recommends purchase.
 - g. Monitors unauthorized use of department-owned and leased lands and develops corrective actions.
 - h. Directs activities of land management crews on wildlife habitat and fishing access projects.
 4. Enforces laws and regulations to ensure compliance, wise and equitable use of the state's wildlife and fisheries resources, and promote public safety.
 - a. Plans and conducts enforcement and surveillance activities and apprehends, arrests, and cites violators.
 - b. Conducts investigations and resolves cases by collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses, interrogating suspects, preparing forms and reports, and testifying in court.
 - c. Prepares affidavits; obtains and serves search warrants and subpoenas; seizes, collects, and preserves evidence.
 - d. Checks licenses and safety equipment of hunters, anglers, boaters, and trappers; and monitors related businesses for compliance with laws and regulations.
 - e. Plans and assists in search and rescue operations.
 - f. Teaches law enforcement tactical and firearms training to co-workers and other law enforcement personnel.
 - i. Certifies and records their competence.
 - ii. Testifies in court as an expert witness to appropriate levels of force.
 - g. Coordinates and teaches hunter safety programs and recruits and trains volunteer instructors.
 - h. Coordinates with other law enforcement agencies to enforce laws across jurisdictional boundaries.
 - i. Recommends changes to laws, regulations, and procedures.
 - j. Enforces criminal laws.
 5. Acts as a liaison between the department and the public to resolve conflicts and enhance and maintain a positive public image.
 - a. Meets with members of the community in a variety of situations to relay information about the department; collect public opinion, input, and requests; and establish a network of communication.
 - b. Responds to public complaints, inquiries, and statements.
 - c. Presents department information to the public via the media by writing news articles and participating in radio and television shows, sport shows, and fairs.

- d. Prepares and presents informational programs for civic organizations, sportsmen's groups, and schools.
- e. Facilitates educational programs in the schools.
- f. Coordinates and recommends permits for special events or requests involving department-controlled recreational facilities or areas.

6. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

Reports to a Regional Supervisor or a Division Director; does not supervise.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to represent the department to the public. This is challenging because incumbents work with a public of broad social and economic variety and must find solutions to situations which involve groups with diverse interests and individuals who have conflicting points of view about wildlife and fisheries management. Also challenged to evaluate law enforcement confrontational situations and determine the appropriate course of action and level of force response. This is difficult because decisions must be made instantly and each situation is potentially volatile.

Problems encountered include allocating time to accomplish required tasks adequately and continually reprioritizing to factor in unexpected incidents; meeting customer service demands during off-duty hours; and maintaining proficiency in defensive tactics and firearms use.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Determines components of land, fisheries, and wildlife management plans; prioritizes and schedules work; resolves wildlife depredation problems and other human-wildlife conflicts; formulates license numbers and types for big game and designates hunting unit boundaries; determines probable cause for search warrants and arrests; determines solutions to complaints; determines enforcement response in discretionary situations; develops training and educational courses; recommends state law and department regulation changes, bag limits, and season lengths; recommends improvements in survey methods; recommends expenditure of funds for special projects, equipment purchases, and capital development projects; recommends land purchases; and negotiates contracts for habitat management and other services.

Decisions referred are final approval of management plans, harvest limits, and season lengths; state laws and department regulations; schedule of training courses; equipment, land purchases, and capital development projects; and work assignments outside of districts.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with the public to establish rapport, resolve conflicts and complaints, enforce laws, implement department programs, and answer questions about wildlife and fisheries management and law enforcement; weekly contact with other law enforcement and natural resources management agencies to coordinate similar functions and purposes; and with the media to provide information or write articles about wildlife and fisheries resources issues; and biweekly contact with civic organizations, schools, and sportsmen's groups to present informational programs.

H. Working Conditions:

Works outdoors in all weather conditions and on all terrains and waterways; apprehends and cites violators who carry weapons and are sometimes confrontational and in situations that may involve high-speed pursuits often while alone and in remote areas; operates equipment in adverse weather and wind conditions during search and rescue operations and spawning; deals with hysterical and bereaved relatives and friends; flies in small aircraft at low levels while conducting game surveys and enforcement patrols; is exposed to hazardous materials while applying pesticides and investigating chemical spills and poisoned carcasses; and is exposed to contagious diseases and physical harm as a trained first responder and while dealing with sick or dead wildlife.

I. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- the principles and techniques of wildlife and fisheries management including biological concepts of zoology and ecology;
- federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to conservation of land, fish, and wildlife resources;
- procedures and techniques for implementing wildlife and fish surveys and collecting field data;
- hunting, fishing, and trapping;
- criminal and conservation laws, forensic investigative procedures, and rules of evidence;
- methodologies of arrest, search and seizure, and use of force;
- the correct use of English, grammar, and punctuation;
- the proper use and care of firearms;
- motor vehicle and boating safety laws.

Ability to:

- evaluate habitat, wildlife, and fisheries needs and project long- and short-term management goals and objectives;
- establish and maintain effective working relationships with landowners and the general public;
- prepare and make presentations and answer questions about wildlife, hunting, fishing, and related topics;
- assess and control situations where laws have been violated and perpetrators apprehended;
- communicate sufficiently to decelerate and resolve conflicts in tense situations;
- interview witnesses and interrogate criminal suspects;
- use, and qualify with, a variety of defensive weapons and tactics;
- meet and maintain physical fitness standards;
- work under arduous conditions;
- operate a variety of vehicles and specialty equipment.

J. Licenses and Certification:

Successful completion of the South Dakota Law Enforcement Officers Standards Training Course and the Game, Fish, and Parks Conservation Officer Field Training Program; semi-annual qualification and training with department-issued firearms and semi-annual qualification in defensive tactics and other required law enforcement training. Valid driver's license.